

Forest Partnership FY 24 Budget Letter to HAC

Dear Chair Lanpher and Members of the House Committee on Appropriations,

On behalf of the Forest Partnership—Audubon Vermont, The Nature Conservancy in Vermont, Trust for Public Land, Vermont Land Trust, Vermont Natural Resources Council, and Vermont Conservation Voters—we would like to show our support of some key budget items that support maintaining our incredible forests, including recreational, working lands, and natural areas for Vermonters. These items were supported by multiple policy committees and will help promote a vibrant and resilient Vermont.

Forest Partnership Supported Budget Items:

- Full funding for Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, \$27.8M (HEE, HGen, HComm, HAG)
- Full funding for Regional Planning Commissions, \$10.5M (HEE and HComm)
- Support \$4M base increase for the Vermont Working Lands Enterprise Program (HAG)
- \$2.4M base funding for the Serve Learn Earn workforce program (HAG)
- Support \$1M one-time Small Communities Outdoor Recreation Grant Program
- Additional Department of Forest, Parks, and Recreation staff positions

And we would also include support for H126, Community Resilience and Biodiversity Protection Act:

\$75K appropriations for the Development of a Statewide Conservation Plan, H.126, Community Resilience and Biodiversity Protection Act. This funding would support VHCB's equitable outreach to stakeholders and community members, with a focus on historically marginalized and disadvantaged communities, including costs for travel vouchers, food, and childcare where necessary to accommodate participation, as well as compensation for community members who might be asked to serve on more formal sub-committees and who would otherwise not be able to participate.

Thank you for your time, and we would be happy to answer any questions you might have.

Sincerely,

Audubon Vermont

The Nature Conservancy in Vermont

The Vermont Land Trust

The Trust for Public Land

Vermont Conservation Voters

Vermont Natural Resources Council